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Selectmen's Minutes 11-13-2006

TOWN OF ARLINGTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes
 Monday, November 13, 2006
 7:15 p.m.

Present: Ms. LaCourt, Vice Chair, Mr. Hurd, Mrs. Mahon, and Ms. Rowe.

Also present: Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Maher, and Mrs. Sullivan.

Absent: Mr. Greeley, Chair.

Ms. LaCourt was acting Chair for this meeting.

1. Discussion: Shop Arlington First Lights Saturday

Michèle M. Meagher, Executive Director, Arlington Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Meagher requested that the Board approve free parking on Saturdays for the month of December.

Mr. Hurd moved approval.

SO VOTED (4-0)

2. Website Presentation

Joan Roman, Webmaster

Tabled until the 11/27/06 meeting.

APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

3. Reappointment: Open Space Committee

Elizabeth Karpati

(term to expire 12/8/09)

Mrs. Mahon moved approval.

SO VOTED (4-0)

4. Reappointment: Conservation Commission

Ellen Reed

(term to expire 11/10/09)

Ms. Rowe moved approval.

SO VOTED (4-0)

LICENSES & PERMITS

5. Request: One-Day Beer & Wine License, 11/18/06, Church of Our Savior

Benjamin Garton, Director of Development

Mr. Hurd moved approval.

SO VOTED (4-0)

6. CITIZENS OPEN FORUM

There were no matters presented for consideration of the Board.

TRAFFIC RULES & ORDERS/OTHER BUSINESS7. Discussion: Health Insurance Recommendations January 1, 2007

Brian F. Sullivan, Town Manager

(tabled from 10/30/06 & 11/6/06)

Mrs. Mahon moved that all previous votes concerning making any changes to retiree co-pays and HMO percentage contribution rates to be effective January 1, 2007 be reconsidered.

SO VOTED

(4-0)

Mrs. Mahon started the discussion stating she wanted the union contracts to be settled prior to making a decision on the retiree health benefits. Mrs. Mahon is interested in funding retiree healthcare in a similar way as the pension is funded.

Mrs. Mahon feels that since there is no collective bargaining the retirees have no voice so the Selectmen should be their voice and she requested getting this information earlier, perhaps June, so that the Board is better prepared and information could be sent out earlier.

Ms. Rowe stated it is a complex subject with many issues and agreed with Mrs. Mahon that she couldn't vote the co-pay changes until after the teachers vote to approve their co-pay changes in their proposed contract. Ms. Rowe is in favor of "means testing" as an aid to help people in need. Ms. Rowe requested that the Board get healthcare information in August at the same time as the Advisory Committee.

Mr. Hurd stated the difficulty accepting changes such as the employees had to 2 years ago and that retirees are being asked to do now. Mr. Hurd said the Town is trying to address a deficit fairly and the Board represents everyone-taxpayers, retirees and employees. Mr. Hurd asked Mr. Sullivan the dollar impact if there was no change to the retiree healthcare and what are the majority of Cities and Towns charging for co-pays? Mr. Sullivan responded:

-the dollar impact of no change is a total of \$196,000.00; \$146,000.00 contribution and \$50,000.00 co-pay, and

-the Massachusetts Municipal Survey for retirees shows that out of 29 communities that offer HMO plans only 4 ask for a 10% contribution like Arlington the others are at 15% to 50%.

Mr. Sullivan reminded the Board that the 15% contribution is in effect for all employees, it's the co-pays that are being negotiated. Mr. Sullivan further stated that the retiree decisions have no impact on union negotiations.

Ms. LaCourt used a spread sheet analysis of a rise in the rate change 10% to 15% for 374 retirees; 156 of these retirees are on managed blue, over 65 yrs. old and at a point where Social Security kicks in and effects earning power, whereas the other retirees can continue increasing their income. The 17 retirees that are out of state have been consolidated to 1 plan but are not affected monetarily. Ms. LaCourt stated that the rise in contribution amount helps mitigate the premium cost, so it is balanced especially with "means testing". Ms. LaCourt stated these are hard decisions and that they effect lives but she is comfortable with these changes.

Mr. Bilafer, retirement committee member, supports and requested the Board to approve the retiree contribution change (has no opinion on the co-pay changes) and stated it would be a hoax on retirees to tell them the Town can continue offering quality care at a 90/10 contribution level. Mr. Bilafer further believes that a fund for healthcare should be established through Town Meeting similar to the pension fund to help offset cost increases.

Mr. Roselli, retiree representative, stated that retirees have already bought and paid for a lower contribution/co-pays over years of not taking good pay increases and that this history should be taken into consideration. Mr. Roselli stated the burden on the retirees is unfair and that he is the only appointed representative for retirees.

Mr. Tosti, Finance Committee Chair, stated that healthcare takes a huge cut of the money budget. Mr. Tosti said the Town can't continue to pay 90% of healthcare, in the private industry they are bailing from healthcare, and the Town needs to be at 25% contribution eventually (he has no opinion on co-pays). Mr. Tosti urged the Board to raise the contribution to 15% by a vote.

Mr. Hughes, union representative, emphasized that the 5% contribution increase is a burden to retirees. Mr. Hughes asked for more time next year, earlier information, so that they can be better prepared.

After more discussion by the Selectmen this is what they felt:

Mr. Hurd: yes on the 5% contribution increase and wait on co-pay changes until next meeting. Mr. Hurd added if savings were not earmarked for retiree healthcare funding then next year he would vote to rescind the 5% increase.

Mrs. Mahon: wait for both issues until negotiations are finalized.

Ms. Rowe: yes on the 5% contribution increase and wait on co-pay changes until negotiations are finalized with teachers.

Ms. LaCourt: yes on the 5% contribution increase and yes on the co-pay changes.

Ms. Rowe moved to table co-pay decisions until the 11/27 meeting

VOTE FAILED (2-2)

Ms. LaCourt and Mrs. Mahon voted in the negative.

Mrs. Mahon moved that all previous votes taken by the Board which alters in anyway co-pays and HMO contribution rates for retirees are hereby rescinded and such co-pays and contribution rates will be the same as though effective January 1, 2006.

VOTE FAILED (2-2)

Ms. LaCourt and Mr. Hurd voted in the negative.

The Selectmen requested Mr. Sullivan to implement a communication campaign with the retirees including phone calls, written notices, and an informational meeting.

Mr. Hurd moved to postpone implementation on contribution increase and co-pays for retirees until the 11/27 meeting in order to implement a communication campaign.

SO VOTED (3-1)

Mrs. Mahon voted in the negative.

8. 2007 Board of Selectmen Meeting Schedule

Tabled until the 11/27/06 meeting

The Selectmen agreed that they would pre-circulate their list of goals to each other but make no comments back. They also agreed to start with the evaluation of last year's goals. Goals should be similar for both the Selectmen and Town Manager.

The Selectmen also agreed that goal updates should be revisited at each meeting.

9. Update: Sunnyside Ave. Neighbors Regarding DCR Meeting

Ms. Barbara Natke, Sunnyside Neighborhood Association & East Arlington Good Neighbor Committee representative, requested that the Board join their neighborhood opposition of the bike path on the Arlington side and write a letter to the DCR with the following concerns. The four main reasons against the bike path are:

- misplaced priority of DCR funds, money would be better spent on bank stabilization, removing dangerous rusty pipes and removal of Japanese Knotweed.

- the DCR does not have a good "maintenance record" and would be problematic with CSO discharge.

- redundancy of bike paths, both Arlington side and Somerville side.

- keep the land as "open land", preserve nature and wildlife.

Ms. Mahon asked that Mr. Sullivan write the letter including a meeting request and to strongly reiterate the original decision from 2003/2004 to not build the bike path on the Arlington side.

Ms. Rowe requested seeing the draft letter and that the letter be discussed during Mr. Sullivan's meeting with Dan Driscoll on Wednesday. Ms. Rowe also asked if a survey could be done to determine the total area on the Arlington side. The Selectmen also discussed including the pictures and asking for T.A.C and the Bike Advisory Committee recommendations on this subject. Mrs. Mahon asked Mr. Sullivan to reserve the Robbins Library Community Room for the next West Bank Alewife Brook Pathway meeting.

Other Sunnyside Neighborhood issues were raised and discussed and it was decided by the Selectmen a second letter be written to the DCR regarding the following issues:

- a need for back flow preventions, currently there are none and there are huge surcharges that occur.

- lime should be spread after each CSO discharge

- a record and more timely information on CSO discharges should be kept and reported.

- a dangerous gas pipe in the middle of the field owned by Duke Energy.

FOR APPROVAL

10. Minutes: November 6, 2006

Mrs. Mahon moved approval.

SO VOTED (4-0)

11. Policy Signs Along Donald Marquis Minuteman Bikeway

John F. Maher, Town Counsel

Mr. Hurd moved approval.

SO VOTED (4-0)

Correspondence Received

Nate Levinson Part-time school crossing guards Be Rec'd

Mrs. Mahon moved receipt of correspondence. SO VOTED (4-0)

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Rowe reported that Governor Romney vetoed the water and sewer funds for appropriation. Mr. Sullivan reported that the estimated impact to the MWRA is \$376,000.00, which will be added to the water bills and/or tax bills.

Ms. Rowe reminded everyone that the Chamber of Commerce awards are November 14th and Christine Connolly, Board of Health Director, and Charlie Foscett, Finance Committee member, are award recipients.

Mrs. Mahon stated she had a concern with Horn Pond Dam limits and would like a meeting with the Town Manager and Public Works (similar to Belmont) go there for a meeting and they come here for a meeting.

Mrs. Mahon requested from Mr. Sullivan an outline of Mr. Sanchez's, Director of Public Works, leaving in December including an update on the Engineering Department.

Mrs. Mahon requested from Mr. Sullivan a report on user groups and fees from the Park and Recreation Department.

Mrs. Mahon requested that the Selectmen's office be in touch with the A.H.S. student representatives to notify them that the Warrant Article/Town Meeting time will be starting soon and invite them to attend.

Mrs. Mahon requested that Mr. Sullivan have Ravine Street parking problems be forwarded to T.A.C. and Lt. McHugh to look at solutions, enforcement, and new policy. Mr. Sullivan reported that the school principal and parents had been contacted.

Mr. Hurd requested that Mr. Sullivan speak and write to our transit representatives regarding the Lake St. resident's bus from Alewife along Rte. 2 which more often than not bypasses the Lake St. stop and keeps going up Rte. 2.

Ms. LaCourt reported that she and Mr. Robert Greeley, Town Assessor, would be meeting to discuss moving the water and sewer debt shift off the tax bases.

Mrs. Mahon moved to adjourn at 10:35 P.M. SO VOTED (4-0)

A True Record: Attest:

Mary Ann Sullivan